JULY 1. 1757.

MEMORIAL

CONCERNING

Removing certain INCONVENIENCIES presently attending the HERRING-FISHERY on the West of SCOTLAND.

HUMBLY OFFERED

To the Honourable, The CONVENTION of the ROYAL BOROUGHS of SCOTLAND, and their COMMITTEE.

THAT, past all memory of man, there has been, and probably will continue to be, a considerable Herring-fishing in some loch or bay about the western isles of Scotland; and particularly about the Long island, comprehending the Lewes, Herries, North and South Uists, and Bara; and if the Herring-fishing should at any time fail about these isles, it

is obſerved, from long experience, they ſeldom miſs to ſwim, or to be found in, the lochs or bays upon the main land coaſt, oppoſite and adjacent to the ſaid Long iſland.

THAT, for ſome years paſt, all merchants and other adventurers in this uſeful, extenſive, and beneficial branch of trade, (to the preſervation and extenſion whereof the legiſlature, by various acts of parliament and regulations has, in all ages, been extremely and juſtly attentive) have ſuffered very conſiderably for want of a cuſtom-houſe in ſome centrical proper place, there having been none ſuch, hitherto eſtabliſhed, nearer than Campbeltown, ſouthward about eighty leagues, or Kirkwall in Orkney, about ſixty leagues northward, and that too with a very tedious and difficult navigation from the Long iſland and the other bays adjacent, where the herring generally ſwim and are found; the inconveniencies whereof to this extenſive and beneficial branch of trade, for the clearance of veſſels outward bound, either foreign or coaſt-ways, muſt, to every perſon concerned, at firſt ſight be extremely obvious. Neither does the cuſtom-houſe lately erected at Fort-William, though not equally diſtant as the other two, in the leaſt tend to leſſen or impair the above inconvenience, as this harbour is ſo far within land, and, on account of various winds and tides neceſſary for its navigation,

is ſo inacceſſible, that very few ſhips enter there, as is very well known to the whole trading people of the weſt and north of Scotland.

In this unhappy ſituation, veſſels freight with herring, (which are to be had only with a conſiderable trouble and expence) and outward bound, either for Ireland, the Mediterranean, or our American colonies, are obliged, in order to procure their cocquets or entries from the Campbeltown cuſtom-houſe, to bear to and ly at the iſland called Giga, which lyes at a conſiderable diſtance N. W. from Campbeltown, which again lyes a good way up from the ſouth promontory or cape of Argyleſhire, or the Mull of Cantyre; and from this place merchants are obliged, at a great expence, to bring the cuſtom-houſe officers a-croſs the main land of Cantyre to Giga, (which, after all, is a dangerous harbour) in order, thereby, to ſave a long and troubleſome farther navigation round the Mull of Cantyre to Campbeltown, ſo as, by this indirect courſe, to gain ſome time in their way to the different markets for which their cargoes are bound; inſomuch that many fatal inſtances of late could be given, where, through this very great hindrance and inconvenience, and other unavoidable accidents, ſhips have been ſo long detained, ſome a month, ſome ſix weeks, and even two

months,

months, that they have loſt their markets intirely. For it is well known, that if ſhips freighted with herring or other fiſh outward, bound for any of the ſouthern markets, do not reach their reſpective ports before Lent, their markets are, for that reaſon, loſt, and, of conſequence, their cargoes alſo. In the ſame manner the adventurers to the Baltic are equally ſubject to the like inconveniencies, in regard they are obliged to ſteer out of their way to the Orkneys, where they muſt ſtop till their cargoes are entered at Kirkwall cuſtom-houſe; whereas, if there was a cuſtom-houſe in a proper centrical place, where the herring are catched, theſe obſtructions and delays, with the heavy loſs conſequential thereto, would be prevented and removed; and this again would be no ſmall inducement and encouragement to many more to follow and purſue this branch of trade, ſo extenſive, ſo beneficial to the nation in general, and to every individual concerned in it, if rightly managed.

FURTHER; by the late act of parliament, the 29th of his preſent majeſty, anent fiſheries, there ſeems to be a neceſſity for having a cuſtom-houſe placed where the herring are fiſhed, for theſe reaſons; 1*mo*, Becauſe ſalt cannot be lodged any where in the neighbourhood of thoſe lochs and bays adjacent to the Long iſland where the herring are found, there being no proper

per officer to give certificates of the ſalt being on hand, by which means the importers cannot clear their ſalt accompts as the law directs. *2do*, That as the proprietors of ſalt are obliged to bond it at no leſs than ten ſhillings Sterling *per* buſhel, if they cannot regularly clear their accompts at leaſt once a year, the want of ſuch clearance, probably, may go very near to perplex, if not totally to ruin them. *3tio*, That, under theſe difficulties, no man of ſtock will become an adventurer in the Herring-fiſhing, as he cannot poſſibly clear his ſalt accompts as the law directs: whereas, if a cuſtom-houſe was placed in the iſland of the Lewes, this, it is humbly apprehended, would at once not only prevent theſe inconveniencies, but alſo might, in many other reſpects, tend to promote the public welfare and utility.

And with reſpect to the particular place where this cuſtom-houſe ſhould be erected, after the ſtricteſt enquiry, it is humbly ſuggeſted, That the port of Stornoway, in the iſland of the Lewes, is the moſt proper and convenient place for that purpoſe, ſo as to anſwer the beneficial purpoſe intended. This port is ſituated in the centre of all the fiſhings upon the weſt coaſt of Scotland and iſlands, where the Herring-fiſhing ſeldom or never fails, and where there is alſo a conſiderable cod and ling fiſhing,

which, if properly profecuted, might turn out to great account. ---There is alſo at Stornoway an exceeding good natural harbour, capable of receiving all veſſels and ſhipping employed in this extenſive branch of trade, with the beſt anchoring ground, the beſt in-lets and out-lets for ſhipping, whether they intend to proceed to the Streights, Weſt Indies, or the Baltic: and all the creeks and harbours round the iſland, where there are a great many ſuch, are lately, with great exactneſs, navigated, ſounded, and laid down by the ingenious Mr Mackenzie, employed by the lords of the admiralty for that purpoſe; ſo that by his charts, no ſhipmaſter can be at a loſs to find a harbour even without a pilot. Add to this, that Stornoway is a village where there are about 1000 inhabitants, whereto many ſhips do anually reſort and put in, where they may be ſupplied with proviſions and other neceſſaries they have occaſion for.

THERE is alſo a poſt-office of late erected there, and the packet-boat, at the public expence, goes regularly every week betwixt Stornoway and the coaſt on the main land at Pollew, from whence runners go weekly to Inverneſs, whereby a regular correſpondence may be carried on; a benefit which highly concerns the improvement of commerce, as indeed without regular intercourſe and intelligence trade cannot be proſecuted with ſpirit.

AGAIN:

AGAIN: if a cuſtom-houſe was erected at Stornoway, it would be ſo centrical to the Herring-fiſhings in general, that the officers might, without any great difficulty, attend and enter the ſhips cargoes upon the ſpot where the herring are caught, whereby adventurers, inſtead of ſailing far out of their courſe for their clearances, and being long detained by landing, and reloading their cargoes, and other unavoidable delays, ſo as not only often to run the risk, but even to ſuſtain the loſs of their whole trouble, expence, and markets, as at preſent, would, by the proper officers, have all their barrels of herring casks branded or ſtamped upon the ſhore while the fiſh are catched, and before a barrel is put a-board; ſo as on the ſpot their cargoes would be entered and cleared, from whence they might proceed directly to foreign or other markets without any further hindrance, expence or impediment; and the bonds neceſſarily given for the importation of ſalt for curing and preparing the herrings, might be regularly and timeouſly cleared by the importer; both which, it is humbly ſuppoſed, would be of the greateſt conſequence and advantage to this extenſive beneficial branch of trade: and as it would tend greatly to encourage the preſent adventurers, ſo it would induce many others to proſecute the buſineſs. From all which it may be reaſonably conjectured, that ſuch an increaſe of the revenue would ſoon enſue,

as

as would much more than defray the expence of the cuſtom-houſe to be erected, and of the officers appointed for that purpoſe.

As the ROYAL BOROUGHS of Scotland are greatly and chiefly concerned in the above trade;—as they have, on many occaſions, ſhewn themſelves the patrons and encouragers of every reaſonable ſcheme, propoſed for the advantage of the trade of Scotland in general, and of the fiſheries in particular, —this memorial is preſented to them:—it is hoped they will take it into conſideration;—and will judge the affair worthy to be by them recommended to the Honourable the Truſtees for the improvement of the manufactures and fiſheries in Scotland, and to the Honourable the Commiſſioners of his majeſty's cuſtoms; ſo as that a proper eſtabliſhment may be made for erecting the cuſtom-houſe above-mentioned; and thereby the dangers, delays, and inconveniencies evidently attending the beneficial trade of the Herring-fiſhing—may be removed.